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## HOW MUSIC HELPS CHILDREN DEVELOP LANGUAGE SKILLS

November 26th, 2013

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Music is both powerful and important in the lives of our children. Infants' eyes light up when their parents first sing to them. Toddlers dance, laugh, clap and eventually sing along to their favorite tunes. These reasons alone are enough to motivate us to surround our children with music.



Image courtesy of [Raphael Goetter](#)

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Early childhood development experts tell us that not only does music inspire our children, but also, it helps them learn and develop. Music is said to develop a child's math skills, social skills and reasoning skills. Interestingly, music may also play a significant role in the development of a child's language and literacy skills.

If you are hoping your child will become a great communicator, check out some of the research that suggests music may help your child become just that.

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Image courtesy of [Vinoth Chandar](#)

## SOME HARD RESEARCH

Studies that have been performed on the subject of music, language and literacy are numerous, and most of them are mind-boggling in their technicality and impressive in their results. Take a look at just a few of them.

- **A study in Germany** [has shown](#) a link between the brain's ability to process musical syntax (arrangements of musical sounds) and language syntax (arrangements of words). Perhaps because mistakes or irregularities in both musical and linguistic syntax are processed in the same region of the brain, musical training seems to improve a child's ability to identify mistakes in how sentences are put together.



Image courtesy of [Eduardo Merille](#)

- **Musical training** has been found to help kindergarten-age children learn to break words into their individual sounds – a key literacy skill. [One study](#) found that children who received four months of literacy training scored higher on early childhood literacy tests, perhaps because reading musical notations and associating them with different sounds is similar to reading letters or words and associating them with different sounds.
- **A neuroscientist** from Northwestern University [found through extensive study](#) that children with musical training are better able to process auditory speech sounds. Dr. Nina Kraus, whose research team performed the study, suggested that music may be an effective language teaching tool for autistic and dyslexic children.
- **In 2008**, Dr. Jonathan Bolduc compiled a [literature review](#) of many studies examining childhood literacy and its relationship to music education. These studies have found that musical training can help children between the ages of four and six years old learn to read and write.

## MAKING THE CONNECTION

If music is truly such a powerful tool in helping children learn to speak, read and write, what should parents be doing to best utilize this tool?

– **Sing to your child.** From an early age, singing to a child (even an infant) can help engage the child's interest and [cultivate language skills](#). If something so simple can have such an important effect, why not spend a few minutes a day on it?

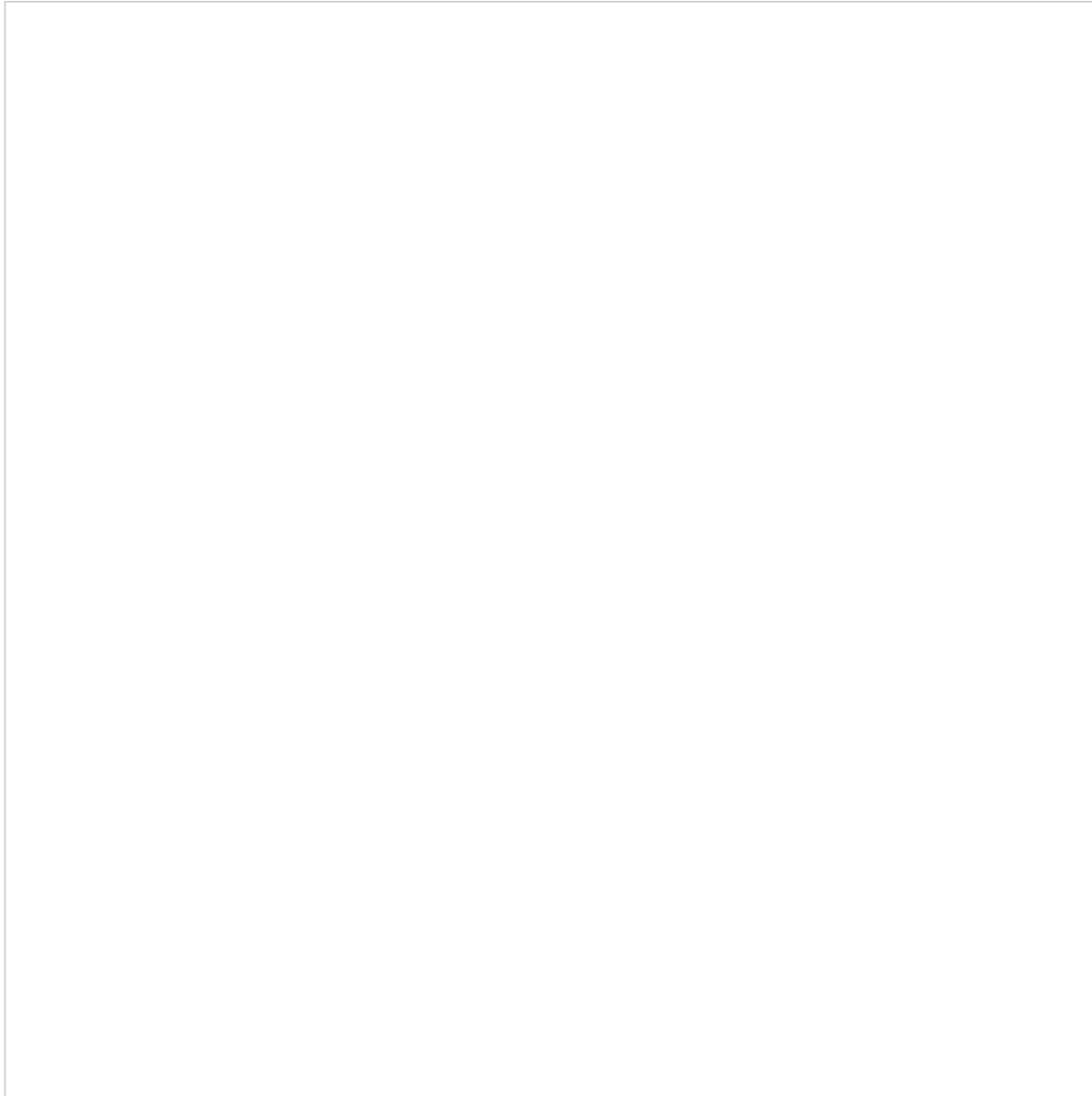


Image courtesy of [US Army](#).

- **Sing with your child.** Children love music. Give them a chance to participate by singing simple songs with them as soon as they're able to form their first words. Make it fun and engaging by adding motions, dances and facial expressions.
  - **Play music for your child.** Expose your children to a variety of different musical genres. It doesn't all need to be Mozart; although, a little Mozart certainly won't hurt. Make sure children are listening to music that reaches them at their level.
  - **Consider giving your child musical instruction.** As we've seen, the evidence supporting the ability of musical training to help children cultivate language skills is abundant. Encourage your child to learn an instrument at a young age. Even a four-year-old can learn the basics.
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16238 Hwy 620 Ste F-348

Austin, TX 78717

512-968-3357

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